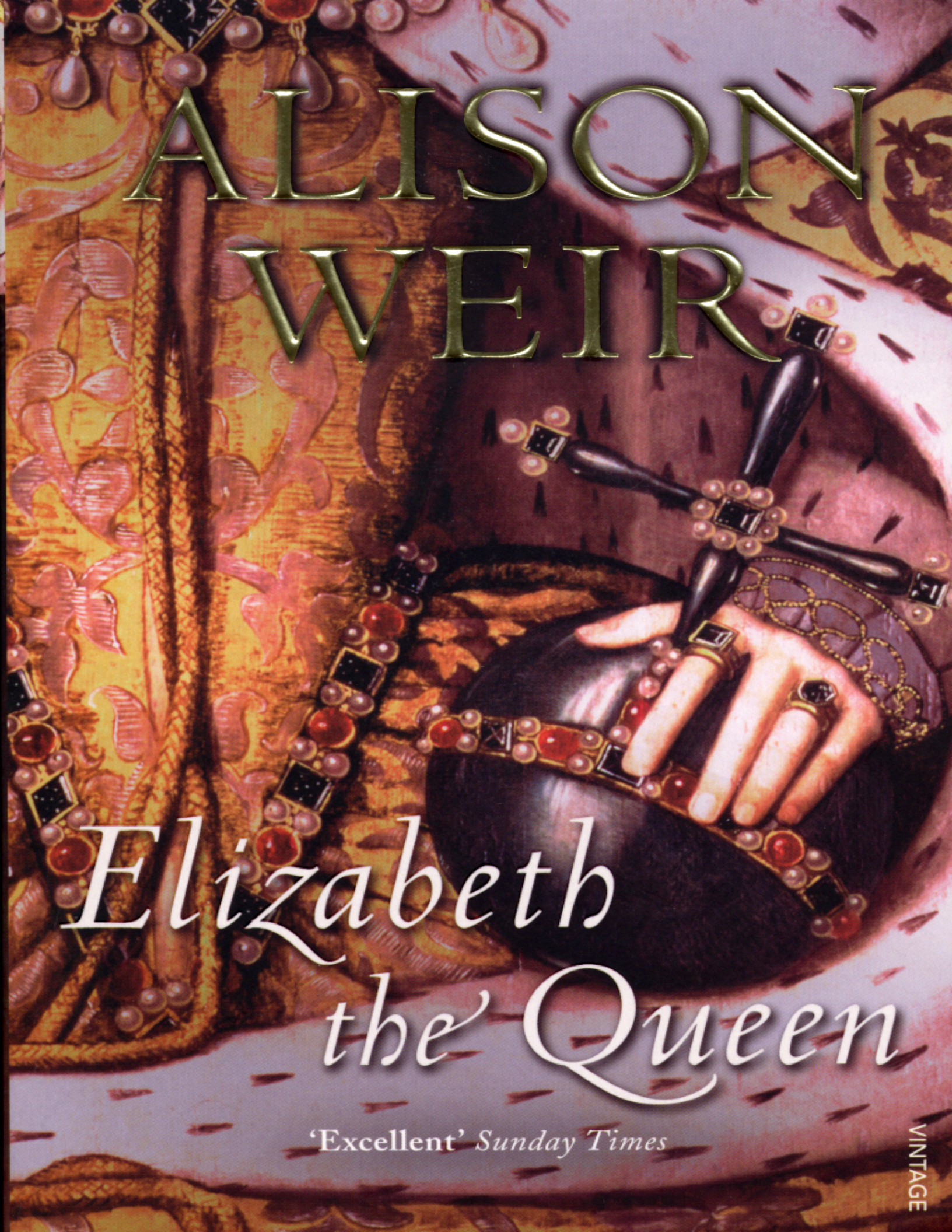
ALISON WEIR
Elizabeth the Queen
'Excellent' Sunday Times
VINTAGE

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About the Book

In her highly praised *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* and its sequel, *Children of England*, Alison Weir examined the private lives of the early Tudor kings and queens, and chronicled the childhood and youth of one of England's most successful monarchs, Elizabeth I. This book begins as the young Elizabeth ascends the throne in the wake of her sister Mary's disastrous reign.

Elizabeth is portrayed as both a woman and a queen, an extraordinary phenomenon in a patriarchal age. Alison Weir writes of Elizabeth's intriguing, long-standing affair with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, of her dealings – sometimes comical, sometimes poignant – with her many suitors, of her rivalry with Mary, Queen of Scots, and of her bizarre relationship with the Earl of Essex, thirty years her junior. Rich in detail, vivid and colourful, this book comes as close as we shall ever get to knowing what Elizabeth I was like as a person.

About the Author

Alison Weir lives and works in Surrey. Her non-fiction books include *The Six Wives of Henry VIII, Children of England, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry VIII: King and Court, Mary, Queen of Scots, Katherine Swynford* and *Elizabeth of York*. Her novels include *Innocent Traitor, The Lady Elizabeth* and *A Dangerous Inheritance*.

ALSO BY ALISON WEIR

Non-fiction

BRITAIN'S ROYAL FAMILIES:
The Complete Genealogy

THE SIX WIVES OF HENRY VIII

RICHARD III AND THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER

LANCASTER AND YORK:
The Wars of the Roses

CHILDREN OF ENGLAND:
The Heirs of King Henry VIII 1547 – 1558

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

HENRY VIII:
King and Court

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
AND THE MURDER OF LORD DARNLEY

ISABELLA:
She-Wolf of France, Queen of England

KATHERINE SWYNFORD:
The Story of John of Gaunt and His Scandalous Duchess

THE LADY IN THE TOWER:
The Fall of Anne Boleyn

MARY BOLEYN:
'The Great and Infamous Whore'

ELIZABETH OF YORK:
The First Tudor Queen

THE LOST TUDOR PRINCESS:
A Life of Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox

As co-author

THE RING AND THE CROWN:
A History of Royal Weddings, 1066 – 2011

Fiction

INNOCENT TRAITOR

THE LADY ELIZABETH

THE CAPTIVE QUEEN

A DANGEROUS INHERITANCE

THE MARRIAGE GAME

SIX TUDOR QUEENS:
Katherine of Aragon, The True Queen

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TRAITORS OF THE TOWER

Illustrations

1 Elizabeth I at her accession. (© Hever Castle Ltd, Hever Castle, Kent)
2 Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, attr. to Steven van Meulen. (By courtesy of the Wallace Collection)
3 William Cecil, Lord Burghley. (By courtesy of the Marquess of Salisbury)
4 Lord Darnley and Mary Queen of Scots. (By courtesy of the National Trust)
5 Philip II of Spain and Mary. (By courtesy of Woburn Abbey)
6 Lettice Knollys, Countess of Leicester. (By courtesy of the Marquess of Bath and the Courtauld Institute)
7 Sir Christopher Hatton by Nicholas Hilliard. (By courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum)
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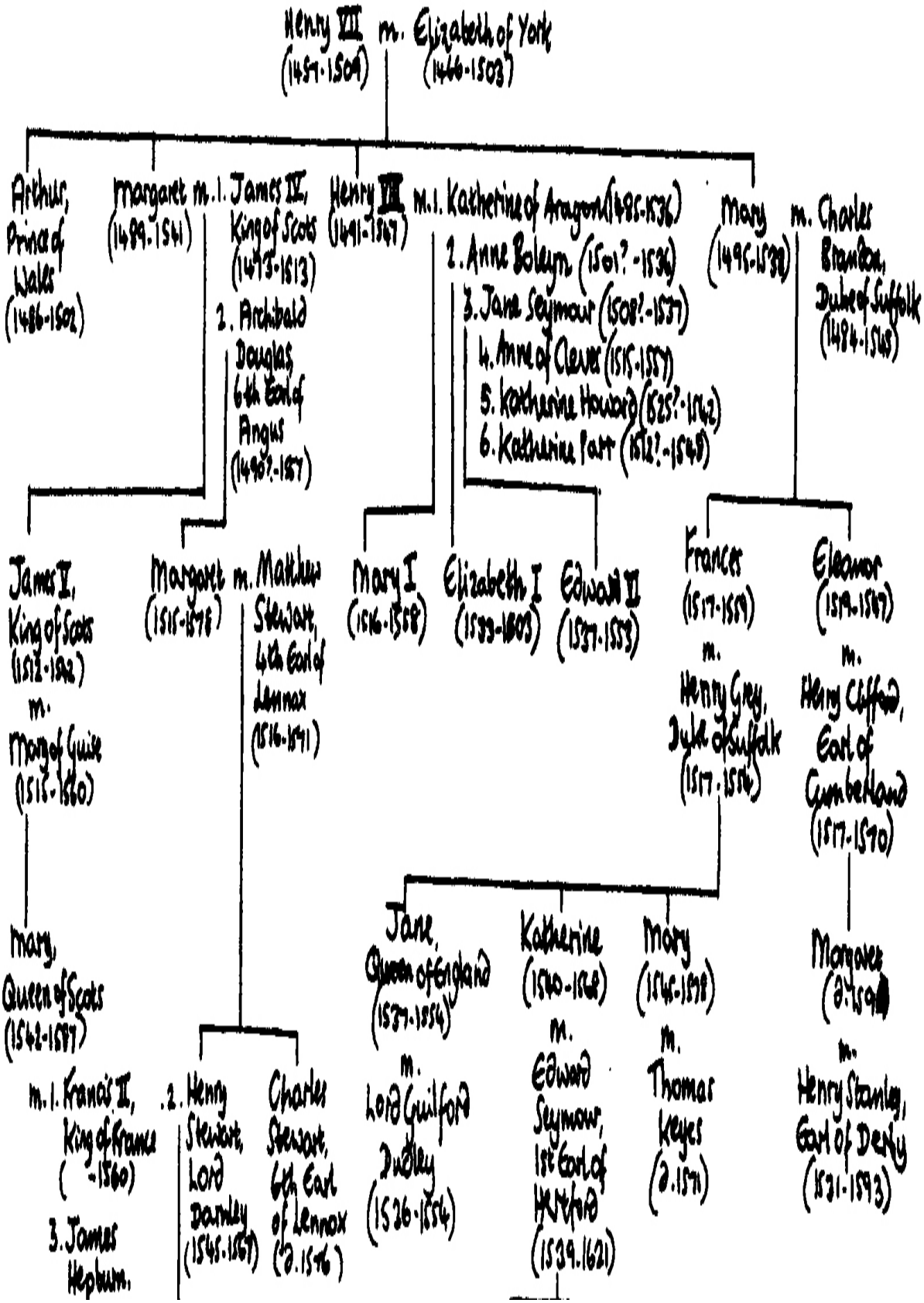
9 Francis Duke of Alençon. (By courtesy of the Mary Evans Picture Library)
10 Sir Philip Sidney. (From the collection at Parham Park, West Sussex)
11 Sir Walter Raleigh. (By courtesy of the Mary Evans picture Library)
12 Sir Francis Drake. (By courtesy of the Mary Evans Picture Library)
13 Elizabeth I: the Armada Portrait. (By courtesy of Woburn Abbey)
14 Sir Robert Cecil. (By courtesy of the Marquess of Salisbury)
15 Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. (By courtesy of Woburn Abbey)

16 James VI of Scotland and I of England. (From the collection at Parham Park, West Sussex)
17 Elizabeth I in old age. (By courtesy of the Methuen Collection)
18 The funeral procession of Elizabeth I. (By courtesy of the British Library)

Genealogical Tables


Henry VII (1457-1509) m. Elizabeth of York (1466-1503)
Arthur, Prince of Wales (1486-1502)
Margaret (1489-1541) m. 1. James IV, King of Scots (1473-1513) 2. Archibald Douglas, 6th Earl of Angus (1489?-1557)
Henry VIII (1491-1547) m. 1. Katherine of Aragon (1485-1536) 2. Anne Boleyn (1501?-1536) 3. Jane Seymour (1508?-1537) 4. Anne of Cleves (1515-1557) 5. Katherine Howard (1525?-1542) 6. Katherine Parr (1512?-1548)
Mary (1495-1533) m. Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk (1484-1545)
James V, King of Scots (1512-1542) m. Mary of Guise (1515-1560)
Margaret (1515-1578) m. Matthew Stewart, 4th Earl of Lennox (1516-1571)
Mary I (1516-1558)
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Edward VI (1537-1553)
Frances (1517-1559) m. Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk (1517-1554)
Eleanor (1519-1547) m. Henry Clifford, Earl of Cumberland (1517-1570)
Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587) m. 1. Francis II, King of France (-1560) 3. James Hepburn.
2. Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley (1545-1567)
Charles Stewart, 6th Earl of Lennox (d. 1576)
Jane, Queen of England (1537-1554) m. Lord Guilford Dudley (1536-1554)
Katherine (1540-1568) m. Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford (1539-1621)
Mary (1545-1578) m. Thomas Keyes (d. 1571)
Margaret (d. 1596) m. Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby (1531-1593)

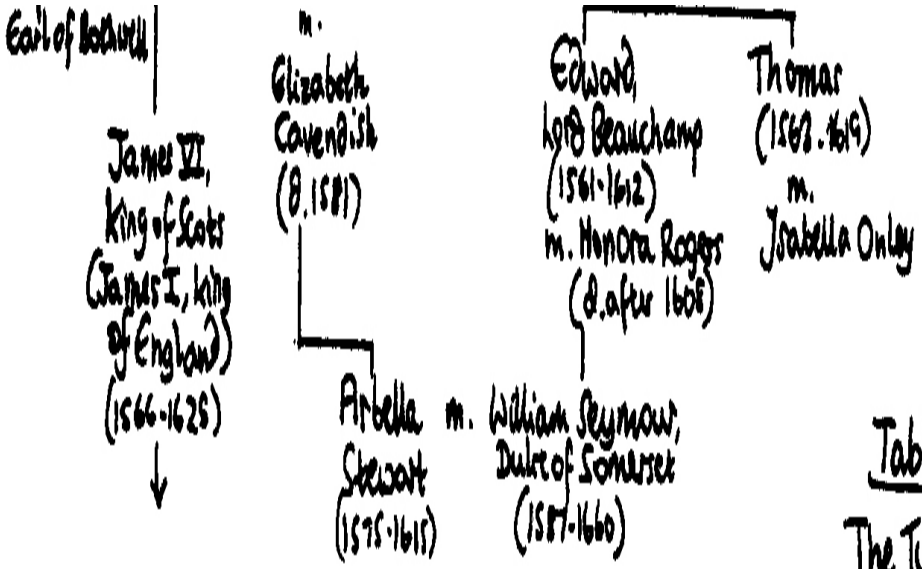
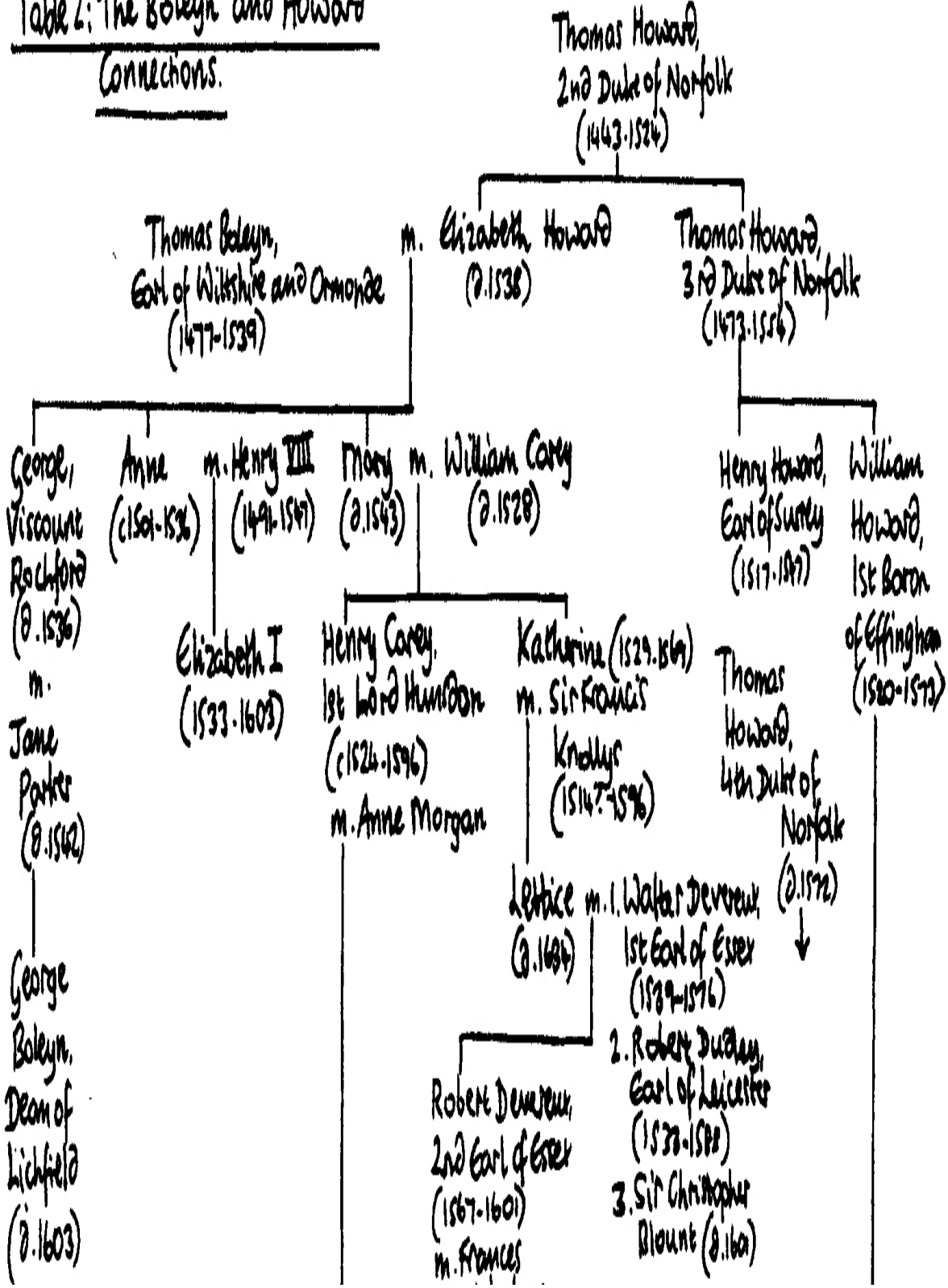


Table 1:
The Tudors

Table 2: The Boleyn and Howard Connections.



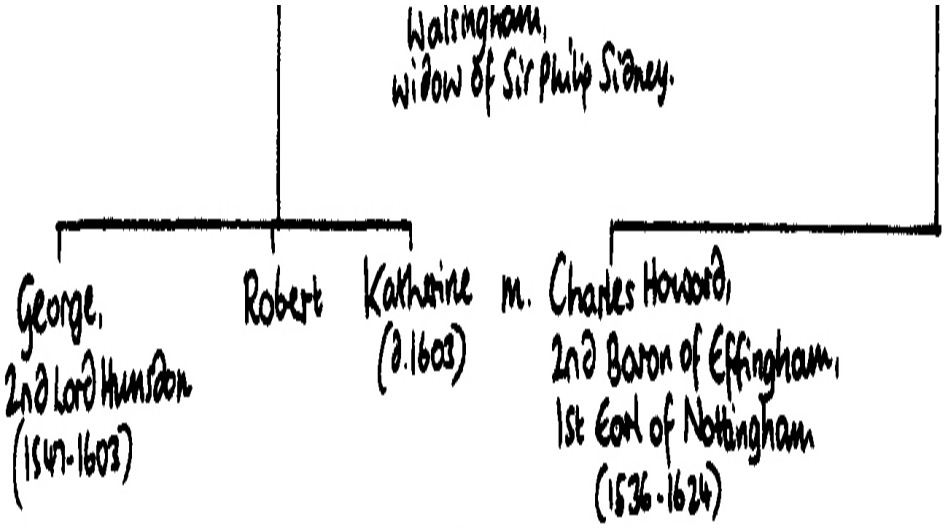
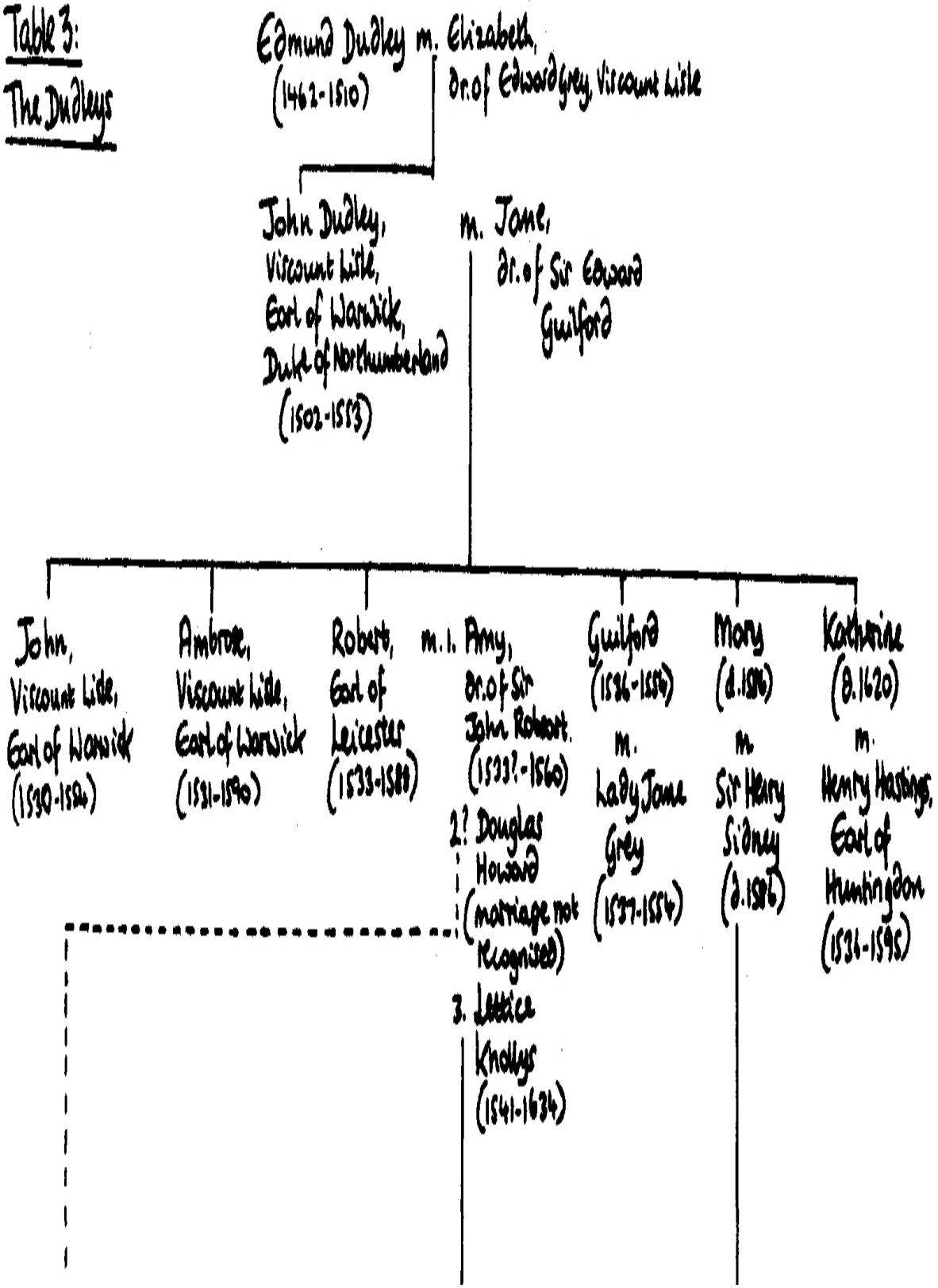
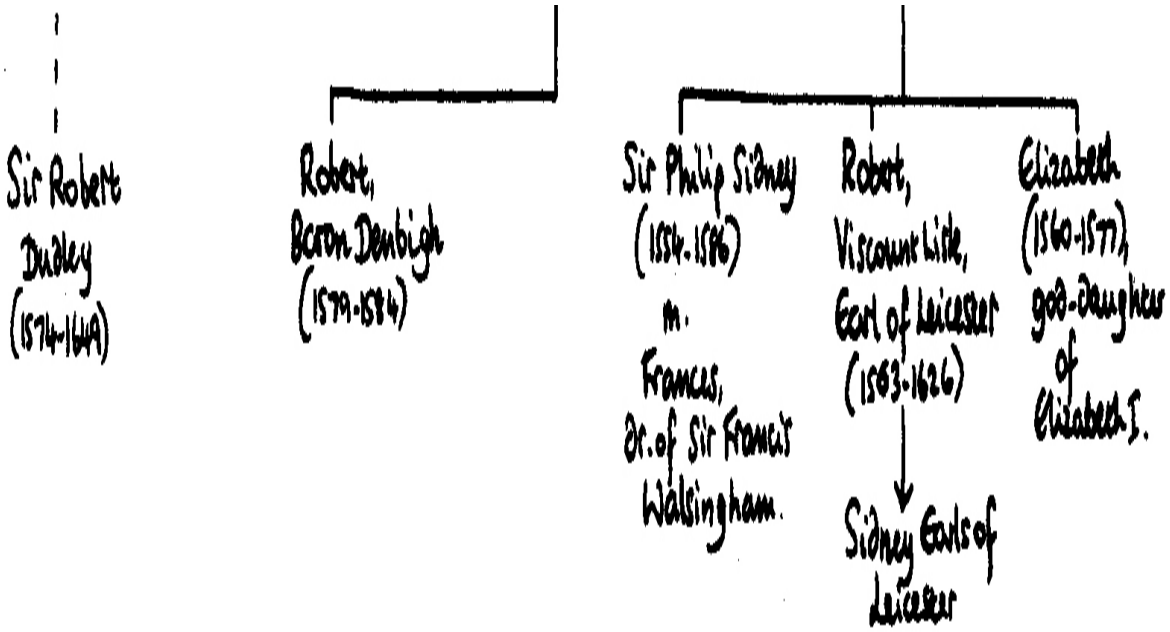

Walsingham,
widow of Sir Philip Sidney.
George,
2nd Lord Hunsdon
(1547-1603)
Robert
Katharine
(d. 1603)
m.
Charles Howard,
2nd Baron of Effingham,
1st Earl of Nottingham
(1536-1624)

Table 3:
The Dudleys




Sir Robert Dudley (1574-1649)
Robert, Baron Denbigh (1579-1584)
Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) m. Frances, dr. of Sir Francis Walsingham.
Robert, Viscount Lisle, Earl of Leicester (1583-1626)
Sidney Earls of Leicester
Elizabeth (1560-1577), god-daughter of Elizabeth I.

This book is dedicated to
my very supportive aunt and uncle,
Pauline and John Marston.

And also to
my equally supportive brothers and sisters-in-law,
Ronald and Alison Weir
and
Kenneth and Elizabeth Weir.

With grateful thanks to all.

ELIZABETH THE QUEEN

Alison Weir

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

Author's Preface

Elizabeth the Queen is the third volume in my series of books on the Tudor monarchs. Having chronicled Elizabeth Tudor's childhood in *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* and her formative years in *Children of England*, I found the prospect of writing about her life as Queen of England irresistible.

This was never meant to be a political biography, nor did I intend to write a social history of the times. My aim has always been to write a history of Elizabeth's personal life within the framework of her reign, drawing on her own extensive literary remains, as well as those of her contemporaries. The manuscript was originally entitled *The Private Life of Elizabeth I*, but it very soon became apparent that Elizabeth's 'private' life was a very public one indeed, hence the change of title. Nor is it possible to write a personal history of her without encompassing the political and social events that made up the fabric of her life. What I have tried to do, therefore, is weave into the narrative enough about them to make sense of the story, and emphasise Elizabeth's reaction to them, showing how she influenced the history of her time.

The Elizabethan Age is a vast canvas, and there are so many aspects to Elizabeth and her reign that the writer's hardest task is choosing what to include and what to leave out. The details I have included are those which best portray Elizabeth as queen and woman, and which illustrate the many facets of her character.

There are many stories threaded through the book: Elizabeth and Leicester, Elizabeth and Mary Stuart, Elizabeth and Philip of Spain, Elizabeth and Essex, and, of course,

Elizabeth and her many suitors. In presenting events chronologically, I have woven all these threads together into a single narrative – although, at times, it has felt as if I have been writing four different books!

Queen Elizabeth was such a fascinating and charismatic character that her life as queen merits a book of its own. In her time, monarchs ruled as well as reigned, and the personality of the sovereign could have a profound effect upon the history of the kingdom. This is a study of personal government at its best.

Alison Weir
Carshalton, 1998

Prologue: 17 November 1558

Between eleven and twelve o’clock on the morning of 17 November 1558, large crowds gathered outside the Palace of Westminster and at other places in London. Presently, heralds appeared, announced the death, earlier that morning, of Mary I, and proclaimed her half-sister Elizabeth Queen of England. Even as they spoke, the Lord Chancellor Nicholas Heath, Archbishop of York, was announcing the new monarch’s accession to the House of Lords.

As Londoners joyfully celebrated the death of the woman whom they had of late come to regard as a tyrant and her replacement by one widely looked upon as their deliverer, the lords of the Privy Council were arriving at the royal palace at Hatfield in Hertfordshire, where the Lady Elizabeth had been living in judicious obscurity after narrowly evading her half-sister’s attempts to deprive her of the crown. Here, as noon approached, the princess, unheeding of the bitter cold, was taking the air in the park surrounding the palace, seated beneath an old oak tree, reading a book.

She was not unaware of her imminent change of status. For several days now, courtiers and councillors with an eye to the future had been deserting the court of the dying Queen Mary and wending their way north to Hatfield to demonstrate their loyalty to her youthful heiress. Yet, when the lords of the Council came and knelt before her in the park, saluting her as their sovereign lady, Elizabeth was for a few moments speechless. Struggling with her emotions, she sank to her knees on the grass, and pronounced in Latin, ‘This is the Lord’s doing: it is marvellous in our eyes.’

Then she rose and, having recovered her composure, led the way back to the palace to receive the acclaim of her people and begin the business of ruling England.

Introduction
Elizabeth's England

Mary Tudor, the first female English monarch, had reigned for five unhappy years. The daughter of Henry VIII by his first wife, Katherine of Aragon, she had suffered a miserable youth as a result of her father's treatment of her mother, whose marriage had been annulled so that Henry could marry her lady in waiting, Anne Boleyn. A fervent Catholic, Mary had also been appalled by her father's break with Rome and later by the establishment of the Protestant faith in England by her brother, Edward VI, Henry's child by his third wife, Jane Seymour, whom he had married after Anne Boleyn was beheaded for treason. Hence when Edward died prematurely at fifteen in 1553, and Mary, his heiress, having overcome a Protestant plot to replace her with her cousin, Lady Jane Grey, ascended the throne to unprecedented public acclaim, she resolved to restore the Catholic faith. But in order to produce Catholic heirs to carry on her work, she made a fatally ill-judged and unpopular marriage with Europe's premier Catholic ruler, Philip of Spain, and at a stroke lost the love of her subjects. Matters were made worse when she reintroduced the laws against heresy and sanctioned the burning of some three hundred English Protestants – an act that would later earn her the sobriquet 'Bloody Mary'. In the last year of her reign, England lost Calais, the last outpost of her great medieval continental Empire, to the French, and Mary was blamed for it. Having suffered two phantom pregnancies and been deserted by

her husband, she sickened and died, a very unhappy woman.

She left England in what her successor would describe as ‘a sad state’, reduced to the status of a minor power on the edge of a Europe riven by religious and political strife, and a prey to the ambitions of the two major international monarchies, Spain and France. England and Spain were technically allies against France, but the re-establishment by Elizabeth of the Protestant faith in England, which was confidently expected by many of her subjects, could not but cause dangerous discord with King Philip, who saw himself as the leader of the European Counter Reformation and had vowed to stamp out heresy. Backed by the Papacy, the Inquisition, the Jesuits and the wealth of Spain’s territories in the New World, there was no doubt that he could prove a very formidable enemy if provoked. France was torn by civil and religious warfare, yet the French King, Henry II, had not only occupied Calais but was also maintaining a threatening military presence in Scotland, whose rulers were his allies. There was no money in the English treasury because much of it had gone to finance Philip of Spain’s foreign wars, and the country had been stripped of its arms and munitions; its chief defences and fortresses were ruinous and, had war come, it could not have defended itself.

Internally, there was dissension and dissatisfaction. Many persons had lost confidence in the government, which was in debt to the tune of £266,000 – an enormous sum in those days. The people of England – who numbered between three and four million – having lived through a quarter-century of Reformation and Counter Reformation, were now divided by deep religious differences. The Count de Feria, Philip’s ambassador in England at the time of Queen Mary’s death, claimed that two thirds of the population was Catholic; he may have been exaggerating, but the fact remained that London, the seat of court and government, was aggressively

Protestant and influential in public affairs. Where London led, the rest of the country eventually followed.

On the domestic front, life was not easy. England was not a wealthy country and its people endured relatively poor living standards. The landed classes – many of them enriched by the confiscated wealth of former monasteries – were determined in the interests of profit to convert their arable land into pasture for sheep, so as to produce the wool that supported the country's chief economic asset, the woollen cloth trade. But the enclosing of the land only added to the misery of the poor, many of whom, evicted and displaced, left their decaying villages and gravitated to the towns where they joined the growing army of beggars and vagabonds that would become such a feature of Elizabethan life. Once, the religious houses would have dispensed charity to the destitute, but Henry VIII had dissolved them all in the 1530s, and many former monks and nuns were now themselves beggars. Nor did the civic authorities help: they passed laws in an attempt to ban the poor from towns and cities, but to little avail. It was a common sight to see men and women lying in the dusty streets, often dying in the dirt like dogs or beasts, without human compassion being shown to them.

'Certainly', wrote a Spanish observer in 1558, 'the state of England lay now most afflicted.' And although people looked to the new Queen Elizabeth to put matters right, there were many who doubted if she could overcome the seemingly insurmountable problems she faced, or even remain queen long enough to begin tackling them. Some, both at home and abroad, were of the opinion that her title to the throne rested on very precarious foundations. Many regarded the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn as a bastard from the time of her birth on 7 September 1533, although, ignoring such slurs on the validity of his second marriage, Henry had declared Elizabeth his heir. When, in 1536, Anne Boleyn was found guilty of adultery and treason, her

marriage to the King was dissolved and Elizabeth was declared illegitimate and excluded from the succession. Later on, having mellowed towards his younger daughter, Henry VIII named her in his will as his successor, after Edward and Mary, and had the terms of that will enshrined in an Act of Parliament. But his failure to declare her legitimate and Elizabeth's suspected leanings towards Protestantism made her a vulnerable target for ambitious foreign princes and disloyal Englishmen with designs on her throne. Added to this, she was a woman, and England's experience of Mary, its first female sovereign, had not been a happy one. In that patriarchal age, the consensus of opinion held that it was against the laws of God and Nature for a woman to hold dominion over men, for women were seen as weak, frail, inferior creatures who succumbed to temptations and were constitutionally unfit to wield power in a male-dominated world. A woman's role was, as St Paul had decreed, to keep silent in church and learn in humility from her husband at home.

However, respect for the royal bloodline was even more powerful than reservations about a woman exercising sovereign power, and Elizabeth was, after all, great Harry's daughter, who had for some years now enjoyed the affection and loyalty of a people who regarded her as their future liberator and the hope of Protestantism. And what England needed most now was a firm and able hand to guide her on a safe course, provide her with stable government and security, heal her divisions, set her finances on a stable level, and enhance her prestige abroad. It was a seemingly impossible task, but many of her subjects hoped that Elizabeth would be equal to it.

The England that Elizabeth inherited was, on the face of it, a strictly hierarchical society, with each man born to the degree God intended, and each class defined by its style of living, manners and dress. This was the medieval ideal, of

which the new Queen heartily approved, yet it masked a new mobility, both social and geographical, given impetus by the burgeoning materialism and competitive spirit that was insidiously pervading all classes and which gathered momentum as the reign progressed and opportunities for self-enrichment widened with a reviving economy. This was in fact no medieval society, but a nation that was to grow increasingly secular, confident and proud of its achievements and its increasing prosperity – a prosperity that would enrich not only the nobility but also the merchants and yeomen who were the backbone of English society. In the 1590s, a Pomeranian visitor observed that many an English yeoman kept greater state and a more opulent table than the nobles of Bohemia.

Elizabeth's subjects were a hard-headed race, largely conservative in their outlook. Superstitious in the extreme, they believed in witches, fairies, goblins and ghosts, and set great store by the predictions of seers, wizards and astrologers. Lives made difficult because of high mortality rates – average life expectancy was around forty years – limited medical knowledge, more severe winters than are usual today, regular epidemics of plague and, for many, the grinding poverty of a daily existence in which starvation might be a very real prospect, bred in these people not only a stoicism and fortitude rare today, but also a morbid preoccupation with death. Life could be short and a wise man prepared himself to meet his Maker at any time.

One of the chief concerns of Elizabethan society was that the Queen's peace should be maintained throughout the kingdom, so that the lives of her subjects could be lived in orderly fashion, yet there was lawlessness and violence both in town and country areas, and it could be dangerous to walk the London streets at night. The roads were the haunt of footpads, and those who could afford to hired bodyguards when they travelled abroad. The law in its full majesty could be very severe on offenders, and the punishments meted

out were often savage – more than 6000 persons were executed at Tyburn alone during Elizabeth's reign, and whipping, branding or confinement in the stocks or pillory were common – though these did not always act as a deterrent.

Travelling about sixteenth-century England was not easy at the best of times. The landed classes were supposed to pay for the upkeep of roads in their locality, but few bothered, hence many roads were impassable in bad weather. Most roads were just footpaths or narrow tracks, yet the main roads – the Queen's Highways – did at least have the benefit of a fine assortment of wayside inns, said by foreign visitors to be the best in Europe. Most people got about on foot or on horseback, whilst ladies of quality would travel by horse litter. It was not until later in the reign that horse-drawn carriages – unsprung and very uncomfortable – were used, and then only by the very rich.

London, the capital city, boasted a population of 200,000 by the end of the sixteenth century. It was a crowded, dirty, noisy place where plague was endemic in the summer, but under Elizabeth it became a thriving commercial centre, handling most of England's trade, while at the same time the city boundaries spread beyond the old medieval walls, creating suburbs from the outlying villages. London was not only a great trading centre and port, but also boasted good shops, especially in Cheapside, where goldsmiths sold their wares, and the famous market in the nave of the medieval St Paul's Cathedral. Along the Strand, on the banks of the Thames, the great nobles had their town houses, with gardens sloping to the river. Each had a private jetty, for the narrow streets were so congested that it was quicker and easier to travel by water. South of the Thames, on the Surrey shore, were to be found brothels and, later, the first theatres, among them Shakespeare's Globe. On the opposite bank stood the grim bulk of the Tower of London, which served as palace, prison, armoury and fortress; during

the reigns of the Tudors it had acquired a sinister reputation as the scene of royal executions, yet this did not prevent the Londoners from taking their children to visit the famous menagerie which was housed there.

Within the walls of London, rich merchants built themselves fine houses, controlled the craft and trade guilds, and decked themselves and their wives in fine velvets and gold chains in emulation of their betters. Philip Stubbs, a contemporary writer, described the Londoners as ‘audacious, bold, puissant and heroical’. Bear-baiting and cock-fighting were their favourite entertainments. London was by far the largest city in England; the next largest and most prosperous cities were Norwich and Bristol.

The English, being an island people and on the periphery of European life, were fiercely insular and patriotic, their new queen being no exception. The Reformation had made them even more so, and had given birth to an age in which map-makers and geographers were recording England’s physical features in detail for the first time, and secular historians chronicling her history for an ever-widening audience. The English language, soon to reach its apotheosis in the plays of Shakespeare, was by Englishmen accounted the equal of any other language, classical or modern. Since the introduction of printing in the 1470s, books had become popular with an increasingly literate population whose favourite reading was the Greek and Roman classics, (which were available in many editions, in their original form or in translation) or more modern Italian literature by Castiglione, Boccaccio, Machiavelli (whose books were officially banned) or Ariosto. Poetry, especially erotic verse, was enormously popular. Learning, once the province of the ruling classes and the clergy, was now embraced by the burgeoning middle classes, and from 1550 increasing numbers of grammar schools were founded, many under the auspices of Queen Elizabeth herself, who cared passionately about education. All of this laid the

foundations for the flowering of English culture – and, in particular, drama – that took place in the 1580s and 90s, the age of William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser and Christopher Marlowe.

During the first half of the sixteenth century it had become fashionable for gently-born girls to be educated in the same way as their brothers – Elizabeth herself had benefited enormously from this – but after the publication of Balthasar Castiglione's *The Courtier* in 1561, the trend was towards proficiency in social skills rather than academic ones. Well-reared young ladies were expected to be able to read, write letters, paint, draw, make music, do fine needlework and dance – accomplishments all designed to enhance their chances in the marriage market. Nevertheless, those ladies in attendance on the Queen, who was a formidable intellectual, were expected to be well-read and erudite, for the court was a centre of high culture.

Most arts of the Elizabethan period reflected the domestic tastes of the upper and middle classes. Portraiture flourished, but the vogue was for detailed costume pieces rather than the realistic portrayals by Holbein and Eworth that had inspired an earlier generation. It had been Holbein who gave impetus to miniature painting in England, but it was left to the genius of Nicholas Hilliard to make it popular and start an English tradition that continues to this day.

Architecture flourished: this was an age of aristocratic building, with great houses being either restored or built anew in the English Renaissance style. This was characterised by classical design, sculptured ornaments and friezes, tall chimneys, large mullioned windows, balustrades on the parapets, decorated columns and Italianate facades. Gone were the fortified manor houses and castles of the Middle Ages; if crenellations, gatehouses and moats were included in the Renaissance designs, their purpose was purely decorative.